



National Collaborating Centre
for Determinants of Health

Centre de collaboration nationale
des déterminants de la santé

INTERSECTIONALITY: A CURATED LIST

Intersectionality refers to a concept, theory, lens, analytical strategy, framework and approach to tackle social injustice.¹ Intersectionality recognizes that people have multiple identities that interact with various systems of power and oppression, such as racism, classism and sexism, to shape their daily experiences of privilege and disadvantage.²⁻⁵ When applied to public health, intersectionality can:

- deepen our understanding of how various social and structural determinants of health interact to influence health and well-being;⁶ and
- provide an approach to disrupt systems of oppression that produce health inequities.²

The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health is offering this curated list of resources and tools to support public health practitioners, decision-makers, policy-makers and organizations to understand and apply intersectionality within public health.

Currently, there are limited resources on intersectionality specifically intended for use within public health practice and organizations. While there is some literature that describes intersectionality's potential value to the field of public health, there are few resources that provide evidence and guidance on how to apply intersectionality within public health practice, policy and research. To begin to fill this gap, this curated list provides a foundational set of resources for public health in Canada.

The curated list is organized in three categories: the historical roots of intersectionality; an overview of intersectionality, including key principles, tenets and varied uses; and the application of intersectionality in public health.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Though the term intersectionality is widely believed to have been coined in 1989, its historical roots extend back to at least the 19th century in Black feminist thought and activism. Understanding the roots of intersectionality is critical to applying intersectionality in public health.

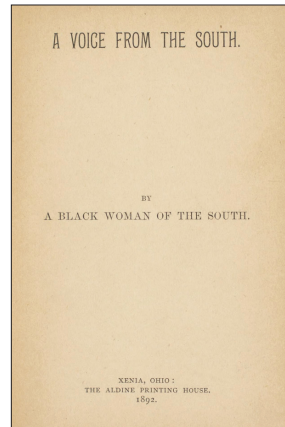


[Ain't I a woman](#)

Truth S. [1851].

In this speech,⁷ Sojourner Truth, a women's rights activist born into slavery, provides one of the earliest known expressions of some of intersectionality's core ideas, highlighting her

experiences as being both Black and a woman living in the United States in the 19th century. The speech has been a source of debate, with some accounts suggesting that she never uttered the phrase most attributed to her: "Ain't I a woman?" Regardless, the speech highlights the importance of Black women within abolitionist and women's rights movements.



[A voice from the South: By a Black woman of the South](#)

Cooper AJ. [1892].

This collection of essays explores various interconnected topics, including women's rights and racial segregation.⁸

In the collection, Cooper argues that Black women's needs and unique circumstances in society are often rendered invisible but that racial and societal "progress" cannot occur without them.

OVERVIEW OF INTERSECTIONALITY: KEY PRINCIPLES, TENETS AND VARIED USES

This section identifies resources to introduce readers/listeners to intersectionality's major tenets and principles as well as the various ways that intersectionality can be applied. Familiarity with these resources will help public health practitioners, decision-makers, policy-makers and researchers deepen their understanding of intersectionality and potential strategies for implementation.

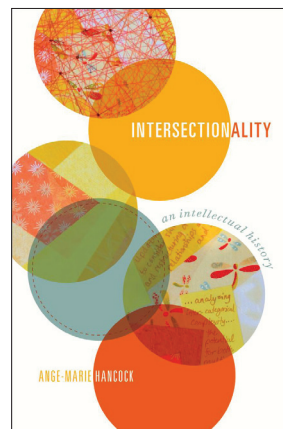


[Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics](#)

Crenshaw K. [1989].

In this foundational work, legal scholar Crenshaw⁹

explores the limitations of conceiving of discrimination as only occurring within a single category (e.g., by race or sex) at a time. She introduces the term *intersectionality* and describes it as a critical lens for understanding experiences of multiply burdened groups of people, centring the experiences of Black women as on the margins of both mainstream feminist and anti-racism movements. This article provides one of the first noted uses of the term intersectionality.

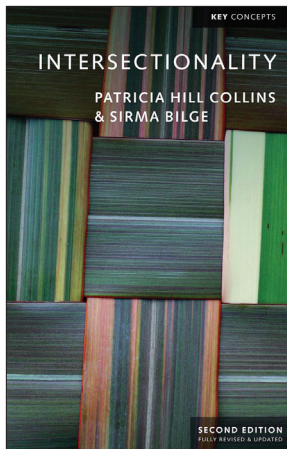


[Intersectionality: An intellectual history](#)

Hancock AM. [2016].

This book examines the origins and contemporary applications of intersectionality.¹⁰ It highlights intersectionality's varied intellectual history in Black feminist thought

and describes how it has been understood in different ways over time, including as an idea, research paradigm, theory and field of study. Throughout the book, Hancock provides concrete examples of intersectionality's varied uses and reach in different spaces. Hancock highlights strategies to engage with intersectionality, amid its critiques, moving forward.



[Intersectionality. 2nd ed.](#)

Hill Collins P, Bilge S. [2020].

The book provides an overview of the concept of intersectionality.² It traces the emergence and expanding breadth of intersectionality and describes key tenets, including social relationality, complexity and social justice.

It illustrates the potential applications of intersectionality through illustrative case studies covering topics such as reproductive justice and social change.



[Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas](#)

Hill Collins P. [2015].

Hill Collins¹¹ explores various focal points and facets of intersectionality, examining different considerations and challenges with the ways it has been defined and

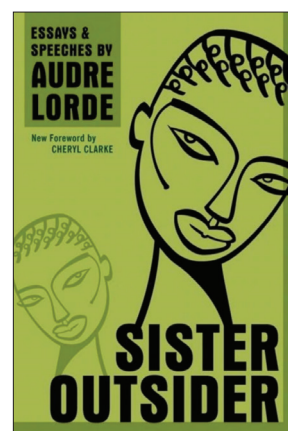
applied, including as a field of study, a strategy for analysis and within social justice projects.



[The urgency of intersectionality](#)

Crenshaw K. [2016].

Crenshaw's TED Talk¹² describes the importance of an intersectional lens to analyze and address issues of injustice. Using the example of police violence, she demonstrates how Black women's experiences of police violence often go unrecognized and unpublicized. Crenshaw argues against a "trickle-down" approach to social justice that assumes that by virtue of attention to issues affecting African Americans and issues affecting women, Black women's needs will be addressed. Instead, she argues that intersectionality is urgently needed to recognize and tackle overlapping forms of injustice.

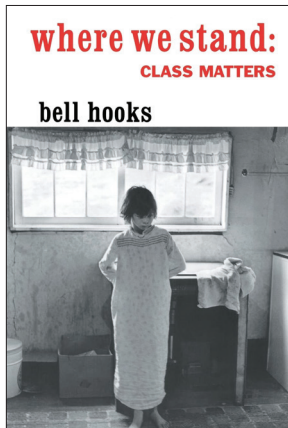


[Sister outsider](#)

Lorde A. [1984].

In this collection of essays and speeches, Audre Lorde¹³ calls for revolutionary change as she explores intersecting and inseparable forms of oppression including sexism, racism, homophobia and classism. The collection

includes the renowned essay "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," which highlights the inadequacies of a white feminism that ignores the diversity of experiences among women. Lorde emphasizes the need to build mutuality and cooperation between groups of women with diverse experiences of oppression in order "to seek a world in which [all women] can flourish."^{13(p112)}



Where we stand: Class matters

hooks b. [2000].

In this book, the author reflects on her journey as a Black woman in the United States, who was raised in a small town in Kentucky.¹⁴ It explores how various forms of oppression such as

racism, sexism and classism are intertwined in shaping daily life and discusses ways forward.



What does intersectionality mean?

White J, Crenshaw K,
Lindsey T, Hu Pegues J.
[2021].

Featuring Kimberlé Crenshaw, this podcast episode¹⁵ discusses how intersectionality can help deepen our understanding of social problems and crises, focusing on the 2021 Atlanta spa shootings as an example.



Whitening intersectionality: Evanescence of race in intersectionality scholarship

Bilge S. [2014].

Bilge's essay¹⁶ explores troubling trends within intersectionality scholarship in which intersectionality has become depoliticized and

divorced from its roots in Black feminist thought.



Pursuing intersectionality, unsettling dominant imaginaries

May VM. [2015].

This book provides an overview of intersectionality and strategies for implementation.¹⁷



The Combahee River Collective statement

Combahee River Collective.
[1977].

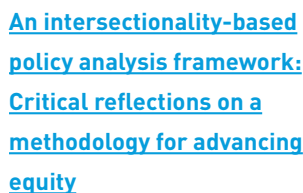
The Combahee River Collective (whose name honours the Combahee Ferry Raid led by Harriet Tubman that freed 700 people from slavery) began as a group

of Black feminists who started meeting in 1974 to discuss issues related to intersecting forms of oppression. The Collective's statement outlines the roots and tenets of Black feminism as well as areas for action.¹⁸

This section highlights resources specifically intended for use within public health and relevant to public health policy, teaching and practice.



approaches to analyzing differences within and between groups of people. The guide provides examples of application in policy and research areas relevant to public health, including men's health, healthy weights and climate change.



Hankivsky O, Grace D,
Hunting G, Giesbrecht M,
Fridkin A, Rudrum S, et al.
[2014].

Evolving Intersectionality

Within Public Health: From Analysis to Action

DAVID K. SHAW

Intersectionality is a differentiator among the most important changes and new ideas in public health research and practice. This article discusses the evolution of intersectionality, from its origins in social justice movements to its current use in public health research and practice. It argues that intersectionality is a powerful tool for understanding the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. The article also discusses the challenges of implementing intersectionality in public health practice and offers suggestions for how to overcome these challenges.

1 *Outline the intersectionality concept, its origins, and its use in public health research and practice.*

Intersectionality is a conceptual framework that recognizes the ways in which different forms of social identity, such as race, gender, and class, intersect to shape individual experiences and health outcomes. The concept was first developed by Black feminist scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, who argued that the experiences of Black women could not be understood by looking at race and gender separately. Instead, they argued, the intersection of race and gender must be considered. This idea has since been expanded to include other forms of social identity, such as sexual orientation, disability, and age.

Intersectionality is now a widely used concept in public health research and practice. It is used to understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. For example, research has shown that Black women are at a higher risk of dying from breast cancer than white women, and that this risk is even higher for Black women who are also poor. This is because Black women are more likely to be uninsured, have less access to healthcare, and live in areas with higher rates of pollution and violence. By using an intersectional approach, public health researchers and practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can develop more effective interventions to improve health outcomes for all people.

2 *Discuss the challenges of implementing intersectionality in public health practice and offer suggestions for how to overcome these challenges.*

One of the main challenges of implementing intersectionality in public health practice is the lack of data. Public health researchers often do not have the data they need to understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. For example, many public health datasets do not include information on race, gender, and class, or they do not include information on the intersection of these factors. This makes it difficult for researchers to understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and it makes it difficult for practitioners to develop effective interventions to improve health outcomes for all people.

Another challenge of implementing intersectionality in public health practice is the lack of training. Public health practitioners often do not have the training they need to understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. For example, many public health practitioners do not have training in cultural competency, which is the ability to understand and respect the differences between people from different cultures. This makes it difficult for practitioners to provide care that is respectful and effective for all people.

Despite these challenges, there are many ways to overcome them. One way is to collect more data. Public health researchers can collect data on the intersection of race, gender, and class, and they can collect data on the intersection of these factors with other factors, such as sexual orientation, disability, and age. Another way is to provide more training. Public health practitioners can receive training in cultural competency, and they can receive training in other areas that are important for providing care to all people. By overcoming these challenges, public health researchers and practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can develop more effective interventions to improve health outcomes for all people.

3 *Discuss the importance of intersectionality in public health research and practice and offer suggestions for how to use intersectionality to improve health outcomes for all people.*

Intersectionality is an important concept in public health research and practice because it helps us understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. By using an intersectional approach, public health researchers and practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can develop more effective interventions to improve health outcomes for all people. For example, research has shown that Black women are at a higher risk of dying from breast cancer than white women, and that this risk is even higher for Black women who are also poor. By using an intersectional approach, public health researchers and practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can develop more effective interventions to improve health outcomes for all people.

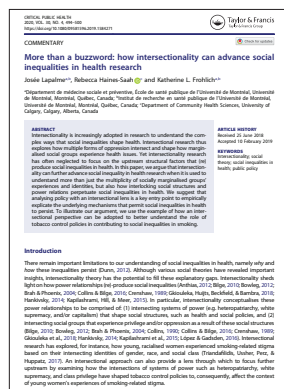
Intersectionality is also an important concept in public health practice because it helps us understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. By using an intersectional approach, public health practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can provide care that is respectful and effective for all people. For example, public health practitioners can provide care that is respectful and effective for Black women by recognizing that Black women are at a higher risk of dying from breast cancer than white women, and that this risk is even higher for Black women who are also poor. By using an intersectional approach, public health practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can provide care that is respectful and effective for all people.

Intersectionality is a powerful tool for understanding the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. By using an intersectional approach, public health researchers and practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can develop more effective interventions to improve health outcomes for all people. Intersectionality is also an important concept in public health practice because it helps us understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes. By using an intersectional approach, public health practitioners can better understand the complex ways in which social structures and individual experiences intersect to shape health outcomes, and they can provide care that is respectful and effective for all people.

Bowleg L. [2021].

This paper highlights the value of intersectionality for public health.¹ It discusses the conceptual and methodological challenges

of intersectionality and possibilities for its implementation in order to address a confluence of public health crises, including COVID-19.



More than a buzzword:
How intersectionality can
advance social inequalities
in health research

Lapalme J, Haines-Saah R, Frohlich KL. [2020].

Lapalme et al.²¹ discuss the use of intersectionality in health research to address

health inequities when oriented towards understanding interlocking systems of oppression. The authors highlight the value of analyzing policies with an intersectional lens, using tobacco control policies as an illustrative example.



Public Health Speaks: Intersectionality and health equity

National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH). [2016].

In partnership with the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public

Policy, the NCCDH⁴ brought a small group of public health practitioners and researchers together to share perspectives on the relevance and application of intersectionality in public health.

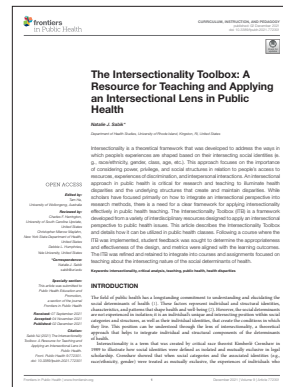


Health inequalities and intersectionality

Morrison V. [2015].

This resource from the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy²² describes intersectionality, its origins and its relevance to health

equity-focused public policy. The paper highlights three approaches used in the Canadian context: (1) intersectional feminist frameworks promoted by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, (2) the Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework and (3) intersectionality-based approaches related to the social determinants of health.



The intersectionality toolbox: A resource for teaching and applying an intersectional lens in public health

Sabik NJ. [2021].

This resource provides a framework intended to support teaching of

intersectionality in public health courses and applying an intersectional perspective to public health issues.²³



Intersectionality & health equity: Exploring opportunities for public health practice and policy

Ndumbe-Eyoh S, Morrison V, Abdi S, Clark N, Cameron R. [2016].

This webinar from the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health introduced participants to the concept of intersectionality and discussed opportunities to incorporate intersectionality into the theory, design, analysis and interpretation of public health actions to advance health equity.²⁴

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